

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 7851

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, SP

SUBJECT: EXACERBATION OF STRIKE SITUATION IN SPAIN

REF MADRID 7491

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: LABOR STOPPAGES HAVE CONTINUED IN VARIOUS CENTERS WITH COORDINATED EFFORT CULMINATING DEC 11 IN POLITICALLY MOTIVATED STRIKES IN BASQUE AREA ON ANNIVERSARY OF BURGOS TRIAL. INDUSTRIAL SECTOR WAS LARGELY SHUT DOWN FOR ONE DAY IN BASQUE COUNTRY, AND 2 UNIVERSITIES WERE ALSO CLOSED ALONG WITH MANY SHOPS IN RESPON TO WARNINGS FROM ETA GROUPS AND COMMUNIST-SUPPORTED ORGANIZATIONS. EFFORT ON THIS OCCASION TO STAGE GENERAL STRIKE IN BASQUE COUNTRY WAS FAR MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN ABORTIVE ATTEMPT ONE YEAR EARLIER AND WAS ACCOMPANIED BY SERIES OF STRIKES -- MANY OF THEM ON UNRELATED ISSUES--IN INDUSTRY, BANKS, AND INSURANCE FIRMS IN MADRID, BARCELONA, AND OTHER AREAS. AMCONSUL BILBAO REPORTS THAT INCIDENCE OF BOMBINGS AND BOMB THREATS INCREASED SHARPLY IN RECENT WEEKS CAUSING NERVOUSNESS AMONG BASQUES; BOMBINGS MIGHT ALSO BE RELATED TO ETA EFFORT TO DRAMATIZE ITS
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POWER TO DISRUPT CIVIL ORDER ON EVE OF ANNIVERSARY OF CARRERO

BLANCO ASSASSINATION. END SUMMARY

2. LABOR UNREST DESCRIBED REFTEL HAS CONTINUED WITH LITTLE ABATEMENT IN PAST 2 WEEKS. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME SETTLEMENTS OF PREVIOUS STRIKES, E.G., UNION CARBIDE IN BASQUE AREA, BUT INTERMITTENT STRIKES HAVE CONTINUED AMONG INDUSTRIAL WORKERS IN MADRID, BARCELONA, AND IN BASQUE AREA. NEW WORK STOPPAGES HAVE OCCURRED AMONG BANK WORKERS IN ALL THREE AREAS.

3. IN BASQUE AREA CLANDESTINE LEAFLETS OF REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION OF WORKERS (ORT) WITH SUPPORT OF SOME SEPARATIST GROUPS (ETA) BEGAN TO BE CIRCULATED TWO WEEKS AGO ADVOCATING OBSERVANCE OF GENERAL STRIKE DEC 11 TO COMMEMORATE BURGOS TRIAL FOUR YEARS AGO. DURING SAME PERIOD AMCONSUL BILBAO REPORTED SHARP INCREASE OF ISOLATED BOMBINGS THROUGHOUT BASQUE PROVINCES AND TRANSFER OF 3 COMPANIES OF ARMED POLICE FROM BURGOS TO PAMPLONA TO COPE WITH SITUATION. GOS MEANWHILE ANNOUNCED ARRESTS OF EAT TERRORISTS AND PRESS (PERHAPS AT GOVT INSTIGATION) REPORTED THAT VARIOUS BASQUE SEPARATIST ORGANIZATIONS, PRINCIPALLY ETA, WERE SUFFERING FROM INTERNAL DIVISIONS AND FACTIONS.

4. DURING PERIOD OF GRADUALLY INCREASING LABOR STOPPAGES IN SPAIN'S MAJOR INDUSTRIAL AREAS, INDUSTRIAL WORKERS IN BASQUE PROVINCES EITHER WENT ON STRIKE OR DISCONTINUED OR SLOWED-DOWN WORK IN SOME MANNER TO DEMONSTRATE SOLIDARITY WITH POLITICAL OBJECTIVE OF GENERAL STRIKE. WORKERS AT UNION CARBIDE PLANT, FOR EXAMPLE, WENT ON STRIKE FOR ONE DAY DESPITE WAGE SETTLEMENT A FEW DAYS EARLIER. MANAGER OF ANOTHER U.S. PLANT IN PAMPLONA TOLD EMBOFFS DEC 12 THAT HIS WORKERS HAD BEEN OUT THREE WEEKS ALREADY AND HAD AS YET NOT RESPONDED TO HIS OFFER OF 30 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE. HE BELIEVED, AS DO MOST BUSINESSMEN IN BASQUE AREA, HOWEVER, THAT DEC 11 WALKOUT BY INDUSTRIAL WORKERS IN AREA WAS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. BANK WORKERS IN BASQUE AREA, MADRID AND BARCELONA WHO HAD BEEN STRIKING SPORADICALLY IN PAST TWO WEEKS WALKED OUT EN MASSE DEC 11 INDICATING THAT THEY HAD ADOPTED POLICY OF SOLIDARITY WITH BASQUE GENERAL STRIKE.

5. POLICE HAVE INTERVENED IN NUMBER OF INSTANCES, BOTH IN INDUSTRY AND IN BANKS, TO BREAK UP MEETINGS OF WORKERS OR TO

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PREVENT DEMONSTRATIONS. IN HERNANI ONE STUDENT WAS WOUNDED BY SHOT FIRED INTO AIR BY POLICEMEN. 76 PERSONS WERE ARRESTED BY POLICE IN VARIOUS PLACES.

6 ALTHOUGH GENERAL STRIKE AFFECTED INDUSTRIAL PLANTS PRIMARILY, SOME SHOPS AND TRADESPEOPLE SHUT DOWN RATHER THAN RUN RISK OF TROUBLE AND FEW CUSTOMERS WERE PRESENT IN THOSE THAT REMAINED OPEN. GENUINE UNEASINESS HAS DEVELOPED AMONG BASQUES ABOUT

SITUATION AND MANY WERE REPORTEDLY INTIMIDATED INTO TACIT ACQUIESCENCE IN GENERAL STRIKE EFFORT.

7. POLITICAL MOTIVATION OF STRIKE IN BASQUE AREA WAS EVIDENT IN FORCED CLOSURE OF TWO UNIVERSITIES IN BILBAO (OPUS DEI UNIVERSITY IN PAMPLONA WAS NOT AFFECTED). STUDENTS FROM MANY SECONDARY SCHOOLS ALSO FAILED TO ATTEND CLASSES AND MANY PARENTS REPORTEDLY DECIDED NOT TO SEND CHILDREN TO SCHOOL.

8. COMMENT: CHIEF OF POLICE OF BASQUE PROVINCES OF VISCAYA, ALAVA, AND GUIPUZCOA TOLD AMCONSUL BILBAO THAT BOMBINGS AND BOMB THREATS WAS PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE CONDUCTED BY GROUP TOO SMALL TO BE DANGEROUS. ORT IS REPORTEDLY MADE UP OF MOSTLY STUDENTS LINKED WITH BASQUE COMMUNIST PARTY. ORGANIZERS OF DEC 11 GENERAL STRIKE HAVE HAD CLEAR SUCCESS IN DEMONSTRATING THEIR CAPABILITY TO HALT INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION, TO INTIMIDATE, AND TO MOBILIZE STUDENTS. ONLY POLICE PREVENTED GENERAL STRIKE FROM BEING EXPLOITED TO STAGE LARGE STREET DEMONSTRATIONS. INCREASED INCIDENCE OF BOMBINGS MIGHT BE RELATED TO ETA-INSPIRED CAMPAIGN TO DEMONSTRATE ITS EFFECTIVENESS AS CLANDESTINE TERRORIST ORGANIZATION ON EVE OF FIRST ANNIVERSARY (DEC 20) OF CARRERO BLANCO'S ASSASSINATION. GOS IS LIKELY TO KEEP STRONG SECURITY FORCES IN BASQUE AREA IN NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS AND TO BE ALERT TO POSSIBLE ETA TERRORIST ACTS ELSEWHERE, PARTICULARLY AS SOME RIGHT WING GROUPS HAVE HINTED AT POSSIBILITY OF HOLDING SOME SORT CEREMONY HONORING ASSASSINATED PREMIER. EXTENT TO WHICH LABOR PROBLEMS OF PAST WEEKS THROUGHOUT SPAIN ARE CYCLICAL OR MORE FUNDAMENTAL WILL NOT BE KNOWN FOR SURE UNTIL END OF JAN OR EARLY FEB WHEN MOST CURRENT CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE COMPLETED. EATON

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